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ABSTRACT

The fulfillment of the need for intimacy is believed to be central to adult life satisfaction, particularly in young adulthood. To explore the development of intimacy in women and to assess the relationships among intimacy status, locus of control, and self-disclosure, 97 college women with an average age of 30 were placed into 1 of 5 intimacy categories (intimate, pre-intimate, pseudo-intimate, stereotyped relationships, isolate) based on interview responses. Significant differences were found among women on the Social Systems Control Scale of the Reid-Ware Three-Factor Locus of Control Inventory. There was a strong relationship between intimacy and marital status, but no relationship between intimacy, age, motherhood, or need for approval. Isolate women were more internal than stereotyped relationship women; intimate, pre-intimate, and psuedo-intimate women scored in the intermediate range. No differences were found among women in the five intimacy categories on the Fatalism or Self-Control Locus of Control scales, nor were differences found among the groups on self-disclosure. The findings suggest that the possibility of a curvilinear relationship between locus of control and intimacy development should be considered. (Author/JAC)

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INTIMACY STATUS, LOCUS OF CONTROL AND SELF-DISCLOSURE IN WOMEN

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INTIMACY STATUS, LOCUS OF CONTROL AND SELF-DISCLOSURE IN WOMEN

The fulfillment of the need for intimacy is believed to be central to adult life satisfaction (Erikson, 1959; Lowenthal and Weiss, 1976; Whitbourne and Weinstock, 1979). Intimacy is characterized by an individual's openness, lack of defensiveness, sharing, mutual caring, sensitivity and generosity (Erikson, 1959;1963; Whitbourne and Weinstock, 1979). Intimacy may characterize a close friendship or a romantic relationship between two adults.

The need for intimacy becomes most salient in young adulthood, when one faces the intimacy vs. isolation crisis (Erikson, 1959; 1963). The outcome of the crisis is either an ability to form an intimate relationship with another, or the lack of this ability, resulting in isolation from such relationships. Research has identified other outcomes to the intimacy crisis besides these two mentioned by Erikson (Orlofsky, 1976; Orlofsky, Marcia and Lesser, 1973).

Several outcomes of the intimacy vs. isolation crisis were found to exist among young adult males (Orlofsky, Marcia, and Lesser, 1973). Based on the criteria of presence or absence of depth (openness, sharing, mutuality) and presence or absence of commitment, 5 outcomes, or intimacy statuses were defined by Orlofsky, et al. (1973): 1) Intimate, in which the person has (or has had) a relationship characterized by depth and commitment; 2) Preintimate, in which a person has (or has had) a relationship characterized by depth, but has not yet had a relationship characterized by both depth and commitment; 3) Pseudoin-

timate, in which the person is currently involved in a committed relationship which lacks depth and has not yet had a fully intimate relationship; 4) Stereotyped Relationships, in which the person sees a number of people, and these relationships are characterized by neither depth or commitment, and 5) Isolate, in which the person has few if any social relationships, is extremely private and reserved, sharing little of him or herself with anyone. The validity of the intimacy status construct was supported by findings indicating that men high in intimacy development (Intimate and Preintimate) showed higher levels of interpersonal perception (Orlofsky, 1976) and affect cognition (Orlofsky & Ginsburg, 1981) than those in lower intimacy statuses (Stereotyped Relationships). In women intimacy development is associated with identity development in the sex role area (Hodgson and Fisher, 1979; Tesch and Whitbourne, in press) and identity development in political ideology (Tesch and Whitbourne, in press).

Based on Erikson's notion that intimacy involves personal risk, or "facing the fear of ego loss in situations which call for self-abandonment" (1963, p. 263) the feelings of power and personal control identified with an internal locus of control should aid in the development of a capacity for intimacy. An internal locus of control, described as having great significance for fully functioning persons (Rotter, 1966), has been associated with elevated self-esteem (Fish and Karabenick, 1971), with more constructive and less intropunitive reactions to frustration, and with lower anxiety in response to academic testing (Butterfield, 1964). Most importantly, internally-

oriented men and women report disclosing more public and private information about themselves with significant others on the Jourard Self-Disclosure Questionnaire (JDSQ) (Ryckman, Sherman, and Burgess, 1973). A general belief that one is in control of one's life may paradoxically provide the secure emotional base necessary to abandon oneself to another, to compromise in conflict, and to give of oneself. Following this logic, it was hypothesized for the present work that internally oriented individuals would more frequently be high in intimacy development than those who were externally-oriented.

Self-disclosure, verbal communication containing personal information about the self, has long been considered central to the development and maintainance of intimacy in relationships (Jourard, 1968; 1971; Altman and Taylor, 1973; Derlega and Chaikin, 1975). Despite evidence that self-disclosing behavior varies considerably with situational factors, e.g. target person's disclosure (Jourard, 1959) and target person's sex (Brooks, 1974), there is evidence for the existence of a general disposition to make oneself known to others which can be tapped by observing a person's actual disclosure in an experimental situation (Greene, 1971). Given the importance of open, personal communication in intimate relationships, one might reasonably speculate that high disclosers would more frequently be involved in intimate relationships than low disclosers.

With the exception of Tesch (1980), investigations of the intimacy status construct have been limited to college students aged 18-22, developmentally prior to the time most people are theoretically expected to confront the intimacy crisis (Erikson, 1959; 1963).

The present study had as its objective a further exploration of correlates of intimacy development in adult women. First, intimacy status, assessed via an interview which relied heavily on a subject's verbal introspective report, was investigated for a potential bias due to a subject's need for approval. This concern arose from the fact that self-report measures are often subject to response-biases based on need for approval, and that an intimacy interview might be especially vulnerable to such a response set, due to social pressures to maintain close relationships. Finally, the relationships among intimacy status, locus of control, and self-disclosure were explored in the current work.

Method

Subjects

Subjects were 97 junior and senior women in psychology classes at a suburban university in the southwest, who participated in the experiment to fulfill a course requirement. Subjects ranged in age from 20 to 50, with a mean of 30.32. Married or remarried women constituted 38.4% of the sample; 19.1% had never married, 14.6% were divorced, 3.3% were separated or widowed, and 4.5% were living with a partner to whom they were not married. Fifty-three per cent of the women were mothers.

Instruments

Intimacy status. This was determined by means of a 30-minute tape-recorded semi-structured interview. A scoring manual for female

subjects was adapted from the original constructed by Orlofsky, Marcia and Lesser (1973). Each subject was evaluated with regard to her descriptions of her relationships with female friends and with her boyfriend or husband. These evaluations resulted in each subject having three intimacy status ratings: one for her friendships, one for her sexual/romantic relationship(s), and an overall intimacy status. The latter rating was usually taken from the rating of the sexual/romantic relationships, unless there was a large discrepancy between the friendship and sexual/romantic relationships rating. In this case, the interviewer made a judgement based on the subject's overall level of self-awareness, the number of close vs. superficial relationships the subject had, and the level of openness shown in the interview, of which intimacy status best represented the subject's overall style of relating. The ratings resulted in each subject being placed into one of the following five overall intimacy status ratings: Intimate, Preintimate, Pseudointimate, Stereotyped Relationships, and Isolate. Eight undergraduates were trained by the author to conduct the interviews and make the intimacy status ratings.

To determine interrater reliability, each of fifty intimacy status interview tapes were cross-rated by two of the trained undergraduates, none of whom cross-rated a tape for which they had made the initial rating. This procedure resulted in three ratings per tape. Agreement by two out of the three ratings was used as the criterion for determining the intimacy status rating used in the data analysis. Three out of three raters agreed on their ratings for 80% of the tapes; two out

of three reached agreement for 88%, comparable to percentages of agreement obtained in other investigations (Orlofsky, et al., 1973; Orlofsky, 1976).

Greene Self-Disclosure Sentence Blank (SDSB) (Greene, 1971). This questionnaire consisted of 20 incomplete sentence cues, such as "My biggest problem is . . . .", "I am afraid . . . .", and "I am hurt when . . . ." which are designed to elicit a subject's feelings about personally important material. Each item in this inventory was scored by a rater on a 1-5 scale for intimacy level, using the scoring manual developed by Greene (1971). The item scores were summed to yield a total intimacy level of self-disclosure score. The SDSB ratings were made by an undergraduate trained in the scoring procedure. Twenty-five of the 97 SDSB questionnaires were cross-rated by the author. Interrater agreement between the two ratings was 80%.

Reid-Ware Three-Factor Internal-External Scale (Reid and Ware, 1973; 1974). This is a 45-item forced choice questionnaire composed of three factors: Self-control, 8 items assessing the individual's expectancy of control over his/her own emotions and behavior; Fatalism, 12 items assessing the individual's belief that one's successes or failures are a result of luck, fate or chance, rather than one's own efforts; Social systems control, 12 items assessing the individual's belief that events are controlled by powerful social and political forces. There are 13 filler items. These factors were developed by Reid and Ware through orthogonal factor analysis of items from Rotter's original I-E scale (Rotter, 1966), along with 8 new items written by

the test authors (Reid and Ware, 1973; 1974). Alpha coefficients for the three factors were 0.71, 0.76, and .076, respectively.

Marlowe-Crowne Social Desirability Scale (Crowne and Marlowe, 1969). This 33-item true-false inventory is designed to indicate a social desirability response set. High scores indicate a high level of this response set.

Procedure

On the first of two sessions, groups of 4 - 6 subjects were administered the following questionnaires in a university classroom: the Green Self-Disclosure Sentence Blank (SDSB), the Reid-Ware Three Factor Internal-External Scale, and the Marlowe-Crowne Social Desirability Scale, and one other questionniare not included in the present data analysis. The order of the questionnaires was randomized across subjects to control for the possibility of order effects. Completion of the questionnaires took 45 minutes. Following completion, subjects signed up for a separate interview session scheduled 1 - 2 weeks following the questionnaire session. The intimacy status interview was administered privately by a trained undergraduate. The interview took about 30 minutes to administer. Subjects were debriefed via a mail-out description of the study and its results.

Results

Intimacy status in adult women. Of the 97 women who participated in the study, five did not report for interviews, therefore no intimacy status data was available for them. The largest proportion of women were Intimate (41.3%), while 10.9% were Preintimate, 30.4% were Pseudo-

intimate, 10.9% were Stereotyped Relationships, and 6.5% were Isolate (see Table 1). The relationship between intimacy status and marital status was significant, as was expected (χ^2 = 33.76. df = 12, $p < .001$), with married and remarried women falling most frequently in the Intimate (56%) and Pseudointimate (37%) statuses, and single women falling most frequently in the Stereotyped Relationships status (39%). There was no relationship between intimacy status and whether or not the woman was a mother, nor did intimacy status vary as a function of age.

Insert Table 1 about here

Intimacy and the need for approval. No differences among the intimacy status groups were found on the Marlowe-Crowne Scale, based on a 1x5 analysis of variance.

Intimacy and Internal vs. External Locus of Control. Significant differences were found among women in the 5 intimacy statuses on the social systems control subscale ($F_{4,87}$ = 2.76, $p < .05$) of the Reid-Ware Internal-External Scale, with Isolate women scoring lowest (most internal), followed, interestingly, by the Intimate women who were next most internal. Intimate women were followed by Preintimate, Pseudointimate, and Stereotyped Relationships women. Table 2 shows means and standard deviations of the intimacy statuses on the three internal-external scales. No differences among the intimacy statuses were found on the other two internal-external scales. Pearson correlations showed locus of control to be significantly correlated with self-

disclosure, with $r = -0.27$, $p < .01$ for self-control, $r = -0.31$, $p < .01$ for social systems control, r = N.S. for fatalism, and $r = -.033$, $p < .001$ for all three subscales combined. Negative correlations indicate more intimate self-disclosures from externally-oriented individuals.

Insert Table 2 about here

Intimacy and Self-Disclosure. Differences in self-disclosure among women in the intimacy status groups on the Greene SDSB did not reach significance when analyzed via a 1x5 ANOVA. A significant relationship was found between self-disclosure and need for approval ($r = 0.47$, $p < .001$), with high disclosers showing a lower need for approval than low disclosers.

Discussion

Intimacy status in women. The women in the current sample fell largely into the committed statuses of Intimate and Pseudointimate (71%), with a smaller percentage each being classified Preintimate (10%) and Stereotyped Relationships (10%); very few women were classified as Isolate (3%). The large proportion of women in the Intimate status, and the small number of Isolate women are reminiscent of the proportions found by Tesch and Whitbourne (in press) for adult women. However, there were fewer Preintimate women, and more Pseudointimate women in the current sample than in Tesch and Whitbourne's sample, which was 22% Preintimate and 11% Pseudointimate. The similar per-

centages of Intimate women in the two samples corroborates Tesch and Whitbourne's (in press) contention that the larger proportions of Intimate women in adult samples compared with college-aged samples (Hodgson and Fisher, 1979) may be due to maturity, consistent with Erikson's notion that the intimacy crisis is resolved in young adulthood. The larger proportion of Pseudointimate women, and smaller proportion of Preintimate women in the current sample, which was older than that used by Tesch and Whitbourne, which had an average age of 25, and a range of 21-35, suggests that perhaps some Preintimate women may settle for Pseudointimacy later in life. Some of these women may meet their needs for closeness with friends as is indicated by the fact that over half of the Pseudointimate women in the current study (57%) were classified as Intimate in the area of same-sex friendships.

Intimacy and Locus of Control. The relationship between an internal locus of control and intimacy status is an interesting one. Isolate women were significantly less likely to view the world as controlled externally by social and political forces than women in the other intimacy status groups. However, an examination of mean social systems control scores of the 5 intimacy statuses reveals a consistent trend towards more externality with less intimacy, with the exception of the Isolate women. This belief in external control did not extend to fatalism, i.e. there were no differences among the groups of women regarding their views on fate controlling events, nor were there differences in the extent to which the women felt in

control of their own drives and emotions (self-control).

On the one hand, the trend of increasing externality, with decreasing intimacy is consistant with the hypothesis that women who risk allowing themselves to be known by and committed to an intimate partner experienced life events as more in their control than women who are not fully intimate. On the other hand, the significantly higher internality of the Isolate women seems on the surface to refute this hypothesis. An explanation to account for both of these findings is that Isolate women may be forced to be highly internally oriented because of the unusual distance they keep between themselves and other people. The lack of willingness or capacity to include people in their lives may cause them to rely more heavily on themselves and therefore to experience themselves as more in control of life events than women who rely more on other people. Once women take the step to involve others in their lives, as do the women in the other four statuses, it can be suggested that the level of intimacy they allow with these others may be a function of their feelings of power and control.

An alternative explanation may be suggested based on Rotter's (1966) notion that locus of control measures should have a curvilinear relationship with adjustment, such that individuals who feel extremely vulnerable to control by outside forces would appear no more maladjusted than individuals who believe they are responsible for every important event which occurs in their lives (Lefcourt, 1976). Moderate levels of internality would be associated with

optimum adjustment. Given that Isolate and Stereotyped Relationships are the two intimacy statuses which represent the least optimum solutions to the crisis of intimacy (Erikson, 1963; Orlofsky, et al., 1973), then the fact that Isolate women were most internal and Stereotyped Relationships women most external, with Intimate, Preintimate, and Pseudointimate women scoring moderately in between the two extremes, is supportive of a notion of a curvilinear relationship between adjustment and locus of control. Lefcourt (1976) describes an extremely internal orientation as potentially associated with "paranoia, ideas of reference...and so on" (p. 141). The association between the Isolate status and extreme internality supports Lefcourt's contention, in that the Isolate status may represent a fundamental mistrust (paranoia) regarding others.

Most previous research has not supported the curvilinear relationship theory, but rather has shown internality to be associated with better adjustment than externality (Abramowitz, 1969; Goss and Morosko, 1970; Powell and Vega, 1972). One explanation for this has been advanced by Lefcourt (1976) who noted that current methods of assessment do not tap control beliefs about events which might sensibly be viewed as out of the average person's control. He states "Only in the separate factor of 'system control'...do we even approach an assessment of less probable event control" (p. 141). This characteristic of the social systems control scale may account for why it alone differentiated among women in the 5 intimacy status groups, whereas Fatalism and Self-Control did not. Clearly, more work is

needed to determine whether extreme feelings of responsibility for remote life events might be associated with interpersonal isolation.

Intimacy and self-disclosure. The results of this study indicated that intimacy level of observed self-disclosure was not associated with intimacy status. This evidence is contrary to the notion that women in intimate relationships have a greater disposition to self-disclose which can be tapped in an experimental situation. Specifically, intimacy level of disclosures obtained without specifying a target for the disclosure does not appear to reflect actual disclosing behavior of women in their closest relationships.

The finding that externally-oriented women disclose more than internally-oriented women counters findings of Ryckman, Sherman, and Burgess (1973), who found internals reported disclosing more information to others on the Jourard Self-Disclosure Questionnaire (JSDQ). One explanation for the discrepant findings is that the Ryckman et al. study used the JSDQ which is a self-report measure, whereas the current study used a behavioral measure. Self-report and behavioral measures have been found to be uncorrelated by some investigators (Chelune, 1979, p. 3), most likely because the JDSQ requests past disclosing behavior to specific target persons, whereas behavioral measures ask for on-the-spot disclosures in experimental situations. Ryckman et al. also found internals disclosed a greater quantity of information, whereas the present study found externals disclosed more intimate information when quantity was held constant. There-

fore, differences in self-disclosing behavior between externally and internally oriented individuals may lie in the type of self-disclosing they do with externals disclosing more private information about themselves, and internals disclosing a greater amount of information. These results support the concept discussed by Chelune (1977; 1979), that self-disclosure is multidimensional, and that investigators should examine multiple aspects of self-disclosure in order to gain a thorough understanding of its relationship to other traits and behavior.

The negative relationship between intimacy level of self-disclosure and need for approval reflects the notion that disclosures are intimate because they conflict with cultural values. The finding indicates that subjects were unlikely to disclose simply to gain approval from the experimenter. This result confirms findings with college-aged women. (Brundage, Derlega and Cash, 1977).

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Table 1

Proportions and Frequencies

of

Women in the Five Intimacy Statuses*

Intimate	Preintimate	Pseudointimate	Stereotyped Relationships	Isolate
41.3 (38)	10.9 (10)	30.4 (28)	10.9 (10)	6.5 (6

* Numbers with decimals are percentages; those in parentheses are frequencies.

Table 2

Mean Locus of Control Scores
for the
Five Intimacy Statuses

Intimacy Status	Intimate		Preintimate		Pseudointimate		Stereotyped Relationships		Isolate		Total	
Locus of Control	$\bar{X}$	SD	$\bar{X}$	SD	$\bar{X}$	SD	$\bar{X}$	SD	$\bar{X}$	SD	$\bar{X}$	SD
Social Systems	4.10	2.30	5.40	2.95	5.79	2.91	6.00	3.16	2.67	1.53	4.91	2.66
Fatalism	2.71	2.24	3.10	2.13	3.32	2.47	3.70	1.83	3.67	3.51	3.08	2.30
Self-Control	4.15	2.31	4.70	2.41	4.89	1.95	4.80	1.87	4.67	2.52	4.52	2.18
N	38		10		28		10		6		92	

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